

Testimony of Jerry Farrell, Jr.

Commissioner of Consumer Protection

General Law Committee Public Hearing Tuesday, February 16, 2010

H.B. 5140 "An Act Amending the Liquor Control Act"

Senator Colapietro, Representative Shapiro, Senator Witkos, Representative Bacchiochi and Honorable Members of the General Law Committee. I am Jerry Farrell, Jr., Commissioner of Consumer Protection. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5140, "An Act Amending the Liquor Control Act."

This proposal is being re-submitted for your consideration this year, following your approval of it during the 2009 Legislative Session. The Department was pleased with the support the bill received last year, but unfortunately it failed to clear both chambers by the end of the legislative session.

As in last year's bill, there are four changes to the Liquor Control Act the Department is submitting for your consideration. First, in Section One of the bill, the Department is proposing the elimination of the Racquetball Facility Liquor permit. This permit type is not in use, and therefore obsolete and unnecessary.

Second, the Department is proposing legislation to allow Institutions of Higher Education, namely, our colleges and community colleges to offer to adult students the ability to include wine manufacturing and wine tastings in their curriculum. Passage of this section will clarify that this practice is permissible under state law.

Third, the Department proposes legislation that would allow the holders of Café Liquor Permits to open for business at 6am for the purpose of serving breakfast--without alcohol--if they wish. Under current law, these permit types are not allowed to open until 9am. The Department has heard from many café liquor permit holders who run their businesses in a similar manner to restaurants (which are able to be open for breakfast), and agrees that this change is fair and equitable.

Fourth, the Department proposes a legislative change wherein the holder of a Café Liquor or Tavern permit may allow individuals to occupy the premise after regular closing hours, when the permit premise is being used as a site for film, television video or digital productions deemed eligible for production tax credits, as defined in statute, by a production company. This proposal is made as a result of the Department learning that production companies often work around-the-clock to complete their projects. Current law requires that that no one may remain on site after closing hours for Café or Tavern permit premises. This change carves out a very narrow exception to that requirement, which makes qualifying production companies and associated personnel exempt, thereby promoting film production work in

Connecticut. We hope that by acknowledging the need expressed by film production companies, we can demonstrate that Connecticut is a friendly place to do business and supportive of the growth of this industry in our state. This modest change in the law, which does not change the hours of service of liquor, will assist the industry and aid in attracting and retaining jobs associated with film production.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the changes to Connecticut's Liquor Control Act contained in the bill. I look forward to answering any questions you may have, and I respectfully urge your support for this bill.